

NSC BRIEFING

25X1

6 August 1958

TAIWAN STRAITS

- I. Chinese Communist military moves in Taiwan Strait area and Chinese Nationalist apprehension have created dangerous situation.



- D. However, there has been no unusual ground force activity in the Taiwan Strait area to indicate preparations for hostilities.
1. Nevertheless, the Chinese Communists have capability--barring US intervention--to initiate major hostilities against the offshore islands very quickly.
 2. Communist forces opposite the Quemoy (garrisoned by about 86,000 Nationalist troops) number about 80,000 and would have to be reinforced before assaulting the major islands of Quemoy and Little Quemoy. More troops could be brought

is rapidly—and possibly without detection—by the
Yingtai-Amoy railroad, completed late last year.

3. Prebarrage action against lesser islands of Erhshan and Tatan always a possibility and could be carried out with troops immediately available.
 4. Communist forces on mainland opposite Matsus outnumber Nationalists (43,000 Communists—23,000 Nationalists) and can carry out successful assault with little difficulty.
- C. Chinese Communists have not reinforced weak East China naval forces.
1. Chinese have most powerful Asian naval force, superior to that of Nationalists, but major vessels (4 destroyers, 17 submarines, 4 destroyer escorts) remain north of the Straits at the ports of Shanghai and Tientsin.
 2. Communist naval vessels near the Straits consist mostly of light patrol craft and gunboats.
 3. No landing craft build-up which would indicate preparations for an assault has been noted, but many junks are always available and could be used.
- D. Communist air and naval power could be used to interdict Nationalist sea supply lines and—should the US not intervene—force capitulation of offshore islands without direct assault.
1. However, this would still be major act of aggression.
- E. Chinese propaganda, which had taken an extremely belligerent line against the Nationalists in recent weeks, seems to have subsided in last few days.

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Approved For Release 2006/03/17 : CIA-RDP79R00890A001000040033-6

A. One major danger of situation is development of large-scale air battle which could develop in minutes into an engagement in Taiwan air space without either side so intending, and which would threaten to involve US forces in that area.

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- 1. [REDACTED] since occupation of the coastal fields, Chicom air patrols against daily Nationalist reconnaissance flights have grown so strong and aggressive that clashes at squadron strength may result.**

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IV. On 4 August,

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[redacted] Chiang Kai-shek assured Ambassador Drumright and Admiral Sweet that he would continue to honor his treaty commitments to the United States before ordering air attacks against mainland targets.

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A. However, this does not rule out completely the possibility of Nationalist action—as the conference held 5 August indicates.

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B. Chiang was emotional at times during the conversation and stated that the US did not appreciate the seriousness of the situation.

1. He said with some heat that the distance from the events has created a different psychology in Washington than in Taipei. It might be possible for people in Washington to remain calm, but it would be impossible within an hour of the enemy's striking power.

2. Chiang then requested additional aid from the United States, asking for:

--Sidewinder air-to-air missiles.

--Rapid re-equipment of his obsolete F-84G fighters with newer F-86F's.

--Permanent deployment of F-100B's to Taiwan.

--A show of force by the US Seventh Fleet.

3. Minister of Defense Yu Ta-wei asked Admiral Sweet to transmit a message to President Eisenhower requesting the President to issue a public statement to the effect that he would consider an attack on Quemoy or Matsu at this time to be a threat to Taiwan.

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4. He and Chief of Staff "Tiger" Wang indicated their belief that control of the Taiwan Straits was already "lost" and that the position of the Chinese Nationalist garrisons on the off-shore islands was critical.
 5. Yu said later he was doing all in his power to exercise restraint, but he feared Chinese would try to provoke incident.
- V. We think Chiang is unlikely to order an attack against the mainland without at least the tacit prior approval of Washington and the backing of United States forces.
- A. Prolonged military tension in the area without increased American support, however, could result in a critical deterioration of Sino-American relations.

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